

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 18, 2007

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Ms. Daniese McMullin-Powell
Chairperson
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: H.B. 178 [Hearing Aid Loan Bank]

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed H.B. 178 which would reestablish the Hearing Aid Loan Bank retroactive to December 2006. As background, the Legislature established a hearing aid loan program through H.B. 262 enacted in 2003. That bill contained a sunset provision which caused the program to lapse in December 2006. This is an important Division of Public Health program which provides free hearing aids to children under age 3 who otherwise lack ready access to the device through Medicaid, CHIP, or private insurance. SCPD provided input on the DPH regulations for the program which resulted in adoption of relatively consumer-oriented standards. See 7 DE Reg. 1758 (June 1, 2004).

SCPD strongly endorses the proposed legislation. The ability to hear has a significant impact on development of both receptive and expressive language at this critical stage in a child's life. Parenthetically, consistent with the attachments, a number of states have adopted laws requiring insurers to cover hearing aids. Council recommends that Delaware consider similar legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions regarding our position on the proposed legislation.

cc: The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner
Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council
Hearing Loss Association of Delaware
Department of Insurance
Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality

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